**Identification**

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| *Nomination* | Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park |
| *Location* | Northern Territory |
| *State Party* | Australia |
| *Date* | |

**Justification by State Party**

Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park is nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List as a cultural landscape under two headings:

i as a cultural landscape representing the combined work of nature and of man, manifesting the interaction between humankind and its natural environment, and

ii as an associative landscape having powerful religious, artistic, and cultural associations of the natural element.

As a cultural landscape presenting the combined works of nature and man, manifesting the interaction of humankind and its natural environment, the landscape of the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa (Ayers Rock-Mount Olga) National Park is the outcome of millennia of management under traditional Aṉangu procedures governed by the *tjukurpa* (law). Recent archaeological evidence suggests that the contemporary cultural adaptations of the Aṉangu people of central Australia were achieved during a period of social and cultural evolution spanning the last 5000 years, and the Park is therefore illustrative of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and opportunities presented by their natural environment.

A unique cultural adaptation to the desert environment enabled Aṉangu and related groups in the Western Desert to develop social groups which were based on semi-permanent water sources, but which held reciprocal rights of access over plants and animal resources in the intervening areas. This adaptation is of outstanding and universal value. Hunting and gathering has characterized by far the greater part of human socio-cultural evolution, yet Aṉangu represent one of the few contemporary hunting and gathering cultures. Their adaptation is all the more significant in view of the failure of colonial settlers to devise a viable alternative in the same environment.

The specific technique of sustainable land-use derives from a detailed body of ecological knowledge, which included a terminology for ecological zones which closely parallels the Western scientific classification. Aṉangu knowledge of the ecology of plant and animal species is making a vital contribution to current research within the Park, including plans for the introduction of species that have become locally extinct since European colonization of central Australia.

Prior to colonization in the 1930, the landscape was managed according to a traditional regime of controlled burning and temporary water sources were husbanded by cleaning and protection of soaks and rock holes. Both practices form part of present management practices within the Park, which have already reversed damage to the ecology inflicted over the previous fifty years.

The outstanding universal value of the Park is established by the presence within it of the huge monoliths of Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa, which Aṉangu and non-Aṉangu acknowledge, together with the unique pattern of traditional land management and its basis in the oral narratives of ancestral beings of the *tjukurpa*, an outstanding example of an indigenous religion creating a spiritual relationship with the land which governs both subsistence practices and celebration of the landscape in ceremony.

As an associative landscape, the Park has powerful religious, artistic, and cultural qualities. The Aṉangu *tjukurpa* is an outstanding example of the indigenous Australian philosophy popularly (but misleadingly) known in European languages as the Dreaming. *Tjukurpa* is better understood as the Time of Law or Epic Time. During this time heroic beings travelled, singly or in groups, shaping the landscape as they foraged, camped, or interacted with one another. At the same time, the heroes performed according to the procedures established by the ancestors.

As clusters of sacred sites, the form of both Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa incorporates the actions, artefacts, and bodies of the ancestral heroes celebrated in Aṉangu religion and culture through narratives, elaborate song-cycles, various visual arts (rock paintings and engraving, body painting, and acrylic painting on canvas), and dance.

As a cultural landscape of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, and science, the Uluṟu (Ayers Rock-Mount Olga) National Park is nominated under **criteria v and vi.**

At the time of its original nomination in 1986, Uluṟu was nominated as both a cultural and a natural property. The IUCN evaluation noted both Uluṟu's "exceptional ... combination of natural and cultural elements" within the terms of the then natural heritage criterion iii and the "overlay of Aboriginal occupation [which] adds a fascinating cultural aspect to the site." It was inscribed on the World Heritage List for its natural values under criteria ii and iii in 1987. Removal of the references to "man's interaction with his natural environment" and "exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements" from the texts of criteria ii and iii respectively in December 1992 has had the consequence that the traditional and continuing cultural qualities of the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park are even less well recognized than at the time of the Park's original inscription.

Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa have been known to non-Aṉangu only since the late 19th century. The gradual expansion of pastoralism south and west of Alice Springs in the 1920s and 1930s led to increased conflict in the region between Uluṟu and the overland telegraph line, as livestock fouled Aṉangu drinking water and consumed essential plant foods. Government policy favoured the settlement of Aṉangu on missions. In 1948 the first access road was built to Uluṟu, to facilitate tourism. In 1958 Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa were excised from the Aboriginal Reserve to form a National Park. By 1959 the first motel leases had been granted and an airstrip built.

In 1973 a Federal parliamentary inquiry resolved that traditional Aṉangu rights should be protected and that Aṉangu should play a role in the management of the Park. Whilst the most sacred area was fenced off shortly after, Aṉangu were denied the right to hunt in the Park or to practice their traditional fire management of plant resources until the Park's title deeds were returned to its traditional owners in October 1985, and the Park leased back to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service **[criterion v]**.

Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa are outstanding among the nodes in the network of ancestral tracks established during the *tjukurpa*, the former because of the extraordinary density of sites within the perimeter of the monolith and the latter because of its position on one of the most sacred tracks. The Aṉangu *tjukurpa* is an outstanding example of an indigenous philosophy which regulates all aspects of life, from foraging behaviour, management of the landscape, and social relationships to personal identity. It provides an account of the origin of being and a theory of causality. It is expressed in verbal narratives, through lengthy *inma* (song cycles and associated ritual), art, and the landscape itself. During the *tjukurpa* heroic beings moved singly or in groups across the landscape, some remaining within the *ngura* (country) now managed by a single group, others travelling hundreds of kilometres and traversing the country of numerous groups.

The ancestors were superhuman beings, possessing the attributes of both man and animal. Their shelters, artefacts, and bodies became features of the landscape. They were the first to exploit, and often to create, the water

and food sources upon which people rely today. Their behaviour established the rules by which people must live today. They are incarnated in living individuals, who are "found" at sites within the landscape and return to the landscape on their death.

The south face of Uluṟu celebrates two *tjukurpa*, the Kuniya (Python People) and Lungkata (Blue-Tongued Lizard Man). Itjaritjari (the Marsupial Mole Woman) lived on its north-west corner. Important events in the *tjukurpa* of the Mala (Hare-Wallaby People) also took place here. Kata Tjuṯa is a key site on one of the most sacred *iwara* ("Dreaming Tracks") of the Western Desert, and Aṉangu have asked that details are not disclosed in this nomination.

To write that the landscape is *associated with* the narratives, songs, and art of the *tjukurpa*, while accurate from a western perspective, does not do full justice to Aṉangu ontology and is a poor translation of Aṉangu concepts. For the Aṉangu this landscape is the product of the heroic ancestors' actions and can be read as a text specifying the relationship between the land and its indigenous inhabitants laid down by the *tjukurpa*. The very rock of Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa is proof of the heroes' actions and being **[criterion vi]**.

**History and Description**

*History*

Archaeological evidence indicates that parts of central Australia have been continuously occupied for at least 30,000 years (although probably only on a temporary basis during the most arid phases). A period of "intensification" and social and cultural adaptive evolution by Aṉangu began some 5000 years ago, during which new tool types were introduced, new forms of rock art created, and new camping patterns established. A broader diet was established, including the exploitation of the seeds of several grass species as additional sources of food. More complex patterns of social organization are manifested during this period with the appearance of larger base camps and the emergence of contemporary forms of rock art.

The evolution of the Aṉangu hunting and gathering culture took place in parallel with the evolution of farming but in a contrasting ecosystem: both are human cultural responses to the changing post-glacial global climate. A key feature of the Aṉangu adaptation was the mapping of social groups on the landscape in such a way that each local group held pre-eminent rights over a particular base camp adjacent to a semi-permanent water supply. The group was responsible for the management of food resources in the country (*ngura*) surrounding that camp, but did not assert exclusive rights to those resources: reciprocal rights were allowed to neighbouring groups. Both Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa are traditional base camps of this kind; around 20% of Aṉangu living at any time today in the Muṯitjulu community are visitors from other communities in the region. The effectiveness of this system is demonstrated by the archaeological evidence of a substantial rise in population density in the region over the past 5000 years.

The first European to see Uluṟu was the explorer Gosse, who named it Ayers Rock after the then Chief Secretary of New South Wales. The year before Ernest Giles had named Kata Tjuṯa after Queen Olga of Württemberg. A short period of competitive exploration began to investigate the possibilities of the area for pastoral expansion once the overland telegraph, constructed in the 1870s, had made it more accessible for colonization, but in less than twenty years the sponsors of these explorations withdrew, concluding that this country was too arid for occupation.

In the first decades of the 20th century the Commonwealth, South Australian, and Western Australian Governments declared extensive reserves in central Australia as sanctuaries for the Aṉangu speakers of several related dialects, designed to protect them from unfavourable contact with white Australians while they were being re-educated into European culture. Aṉangu resisted assimilation, frequently leaving missions and government settlements to return to a traditional life-style and to transmit the *tjukurpa* to their children. A dirt road was pushed

through in the 1940s and so Anangu were able to exploit tourists as a source of independence from government rations.

The Uluru-Kata-Tjuta area was excised from the South West Reserve in 1958 and reserved as Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park, under the care, control, and management of the then Northern Territory Reserves Board. A number of tourist motels were built in the vicinity of Uluru early in the life of the Park. Although the Reserves Board was hostile to any encouragement of an Anangu presence at Uluru, the Welfare Branch secured a lease within the Park on which the Ininti store was constructed as an Anangu-owned enterprise.

In 1973 a Parliamentary inquiry examined the management of the Park and recommended that tourist accommodation should be relocated outside the Park boundaries for environmental reasons. It also recommended protection of Anangu sacred sites at Uluru and training for Anangu rangers. The Uluru (Ayers Rock-Mount Olga) National Park, covering 1325 km$^2$, was declared on 24 May 1977 under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. Day-to-day management was carried out by the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, with funding and overall policy direction provided by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. Some Anangu were employed as rangers but had no place in the formal management of the Park.

In November 1983 the Prime Minister announced the intention of the Commonwealth Government to grant title of Uluru National Park to the Aboriginal traditional owners with a lease-back of the area to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife, in accord with the wishes of the traditional owners. Freehold title was handed over to the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Aboriginal Land Trust on 26 October 1985, and in April 1986 a Board of Management was established to manage the Park in conjunction with the Director of National Parks and Wildlife. It was at Anangu request that the official name was changed in 1993 to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, in order to reflect the Aboriginality of the Park and of its cultural landscape.

*Description*

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park covers 132,566 ha of arid ecosystems close to the centre of Australia, 1420 km south of Darwin and 335 km south-west of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and 1270 km north-west of Adelaide (South Australia). With the exception of the Yulara township (primarily tourist accommodation) to the north it is surrounded by Aboriginal freehold land.

The huge monoliths of Uluru and Kata Tjuta are remarkable features of outstanding significance to Anangu people, whose religious geography relates the cultural landscape within the Park to that outside its boundaries. There are numerous sites of Anangu significance within the Park, the great majority of them around the two monoliths. However, their significance lies not only in their specific characters and stories but also in the *iwara* (tracks) of heroic beings between them during the *tjukurpa*.

At the present time four secret-sacred sites at Uluru have been fenced and protected by legislation, two of particular significance to women, two to men. Although these areas undoubtedly include aspects of archaeological and artistic significance, they are not available for interpretation or research because of their religious significance. Other sites of archaeological and contemporary cultural significance are protected by raised walkways. The access road to Kata Tjuta has been rerouted to take tourists away from the most secret-sacred area.

Twelve major and hundreds of minor rock-painting sites have been identified in rock shelters or overhangs around the base of Uluru. There are also paintings at Kata Tjuta, but its morphology is more conducive to rock-engravings, of which there are many. The exact age of the rock-art is unknown. The style in which the paintings are executed contains elements of the Panaramitee style, reliably dated to 100,000 BP (before present), and there are also elements associated with sites in the south-east quarter of Australia, dated to the last 2000-3000 years. Other paintings, by contrast, were made during the lifetime of senior Anangu still living at Uluru. It is likely that, whilst the tradition of rock painting has considerable antiquity, the examples surviving at Uluru are relatively recent. The rock engravings are, however, much more durable, and the patination on the surfaces of engravings at Uluru and Kata Tjuta is evidence of their great antiquity.

Caring for the land is an essential part of the *tjukurpa*. Anangu developed controlled burning as means of managing the ecology of the Western Desert. The seeds of many food-bearing plants are germinated by fire. Fresh grass springs up on burnt ground and provides food for kangaroos and for people. It is easier to travel through freshly burnt terrain. The reintroduction of this traditional practice as part of the Park's management policy has played a crucial part in eliminating the destructive wild fires which swept through the Park in the period when these were forbidden. Another traditional practice prescribed by the *tjukurpa* that is now part of the Park's management programme is the regular cleaning by Anangu women of rock holes and soaks which store water after rain.

**Management and Protection**

*Legal status*

The area is declared as Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park under the provisions of section 7 of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. The land is inalienable freehold, vested in the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Aboriginal Land Trust, representing the Aboriginal traditional owners. It was leased on 26 October 1985 for 99 years to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife, to be managed as a National Park.

*Management*

The responsible administrations are the Director of National Parks and Wildlife of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency and the Chairman of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management. The Park is occupied by members of the Mutitjulu Aboriginal Community and employees of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

Overall policy direction is provided by the Director and a Board of Management, of which the Director of National Parks and Wildlife is a member and on which there is an Anangu majority. The Director of the Park is responsible for day-to-day management, which is carried out by officers of the Uluru Ranger staff. There is an annual allocation of funds by the Australian Federal Government specifically for the operation of the Park, to cover staff salaries, building, and research and survey programmes.

The current six-year Plan of Management was laid before both Houses of Parliament in 1991 and came into effect on 1 January 1992. Its key objectives with regard to cultural resources are:

- to continue to take into account Anangu ecosystem knowledge and understanding in the planning and implementation of land management within the Park;
- to continue to investigate and record Anangu ecological knowledge and understandings and interpret this material for visitors;
- to expand and develop the programme of interpretation to visitors of Anangu explanations of the landscape of the Park;
- to ensure that the interpretive materials promote Anangu perceptions as the primary interpretation of the Park;
- to ensure that where other scientific interpretations of the landscape are provided (eg geological, biological, archaeological), they are offered in ways which complement the primary interpretation;
- to support and enforce existing policies and regulations regarding visitor management based on Anangu perceptions of appropriate behaviour for visitors;

- to develop such new policies and regulations for managing the appropriate visitor use of the Park as may be required by Anangu from time to time;

- to work with Anangu to identify and take appropriate action to conserve rock art and other archaeological resources of the Park;

- to record and interpret Anangu oral history to visitors.

There is public access by road to the Park. Entry restrictions apply only to Aboriginal living areas and certain sites to which access is restricted by Aboriginal law.

**Conservation and Authenticity**

*Conservation history*

Since proclamation of the National Park in 1977, and more particularly since its transfer to the traditional owners and subsequent lease-back to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife, significant steps have been taken to ensure the protection and conservation of the Park. These include:

- relocation of tourist accommodation and airport facilities outside the Park and sealing of roads within the Park;

- instigation of a fire-control programme based on traditional Anangu burning regimes and scientific research;

- control of feral animals, closing of walking tracts created by *ad hoc* visitor use, and implementation of a regeneration programme;

- completion of a consultancy study of visitor use, experiences, and perceptions of the Park, the findings of which have been taken into account in the current Plan of Management;

- completion of a fauna survey with full Anangu participation;

- imposition of restrictions on the importation of exotic flora into the Park;

- appointment of a Board of Management with an Anangu majority;

- training and appointment of Anangu personnel in the preservation and conservation of the Park and the presentation of its values to visitors;

- implementation of a Plan of Management developed with public participation;

- identification of sacred sites and provision of advice to visitors on the restrictions on access to these areas;

- introduction of Park interpretive and educational programmes to inform visitors of the uniqueness and conservation value of the Park.

*Authenticity*

All the policies applied since the transfer of the Park back to the traditional owners and lease-back to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife have been directed towards the rehabilitation of the ancient cultural landscape of the National Park, with a considerable measure of success. Inappropriate recent intrusions such as the

road skirting Kata Tjuṯa and the first airstrip have been removed and allowed to revert to their former state, and the application of controlled burning practices has restored the ravages of catastrophic fires in the period when they were proscribed.

**Evaluation**

*Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS evaluation mission spent three days at the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park in April 1994 and had discussions with management staff of the Park and representatives of the traditional owners as well as carrying out a detailed study of the Park on the ground and from the air.

*Qualities*

The cultural landscape of the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park is of immense significance. It is an outstanding illustration of a highly successful model of human adaptation to a hostile arid environment which has survived for at least five millennia. The ecosystem is exploited by its human hunter-gatherer population to its full potential, which is heightened by the practice of controlled or mosaic burning. The Park also graphically demonstrates the intimate symbolic relationship between man and the landscape in this non-monumental culture.

In addition to its cultural importance, the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park is also worthy of commendation for its management system and policy, which is based on the perceptions and practices of the traditional owners of the land.

*Comparative analysis*

The closest parallel to the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park in Australia is the Kakadu National Park in northern Australia (inscribed as No 147 on the World Heritage List under natural and cultural criteria). The landscape is traditionally managed by the use of controlled burning and the way of life is determined by the local equivalent of the *tjukurpa*. However, there are several major differences between the two regions. First, Kakadu is situated in one of the richest ecosystems on the Australian continent. Secondly, the nature of human settlement there is very different from that at Uluṟu, lacking the cultural homogeneity and antiquity of the latter. Thirdly, the symbolic and associative significance of Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa is almost entirely absent in Kakadu. While the cultural landscapes of the Kakadu and Uluṟu National Parks originate in related cultural traditions, they exemplify cultural adaptations to opposite poles of an ecological continuum.

The sacred peaks of Tongariro in New Zealand, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993 under cultural criterion vi alone, are very different from Uluṟu. Whilst both express a basic continuity between living communities and their ancestors through associations with the landscape, the cultural backgrounds of the two societies and the ecosystems in which they lived bear no comparison.

*ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

One of the favourite tourist attractions at Uluṟu is the laborious ascent to the summit. In view of the precautions taken to protect secret-sacred sites at both monoliths and the manifest dislike on the part of the traditional owners of this intrusion, it is to be hoped that means will be found eventually to abolish this practice, which disfigures the monolith, both with the intrusive handrail and the endless procession of human "ants", as they are known to Aṉangu.

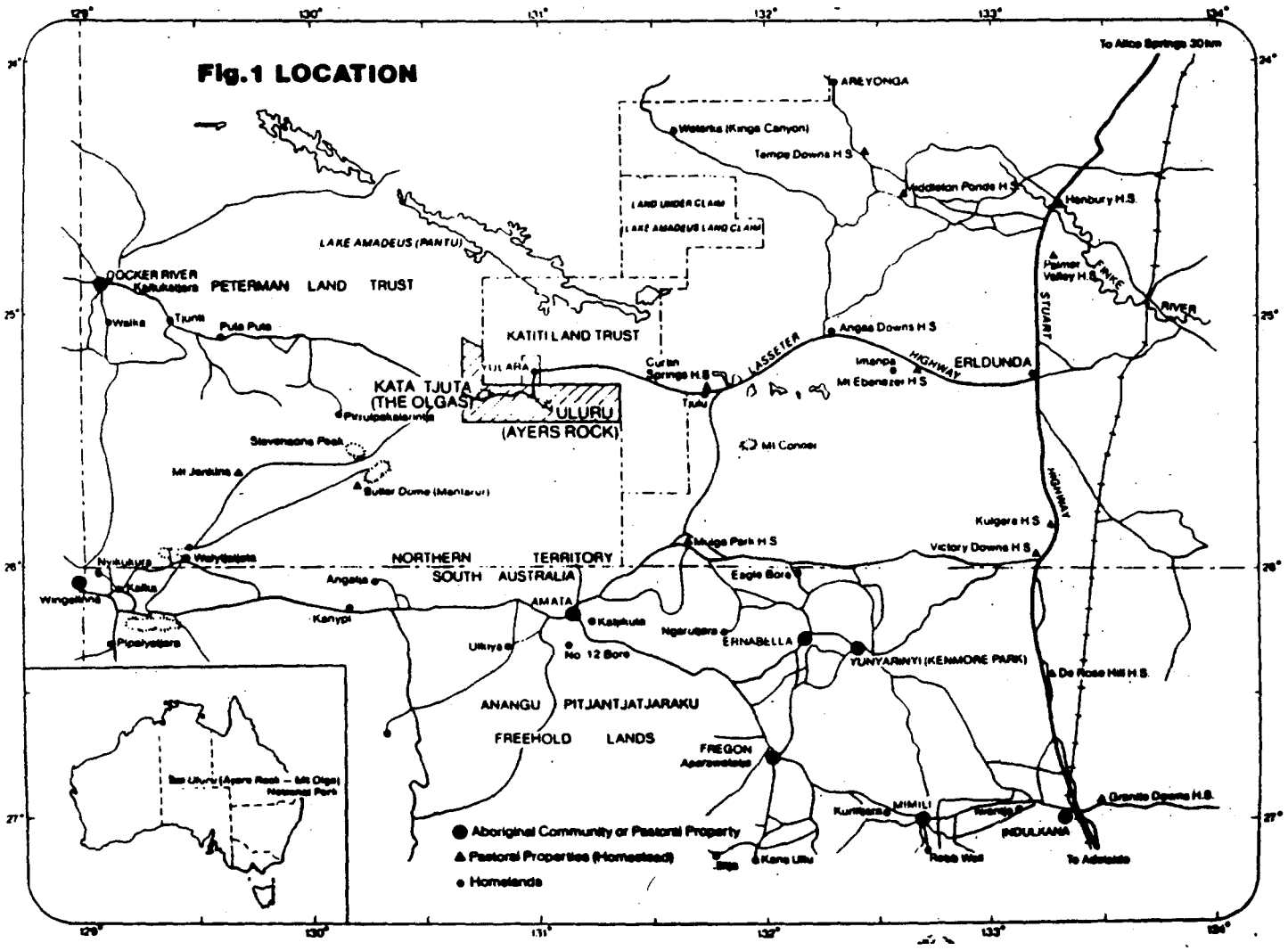
**Recommendation**

That the inscription of this property on the World Heritage List be extended to include cultural criteria v and vi:

- ***Criterion v*** The cultural landscape of the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park is an outstanding illustration of successful human adaptation over many millennia to the exigencies of a hostile arid environment, the integrity of which would be threatened by any change to the present management system based on the practices of its traditional owners.

- ***Criterion vi*** The dramatic monoliths of Uluṟu and Kata Tjuṯa form an integral part of the traditional belief system of one of the oldest human societies in the world.

ICOMOS, October 1994




Parc national d'Uluru-Kata Tjuta : carte de localisation du parc /

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park : location map of the Park

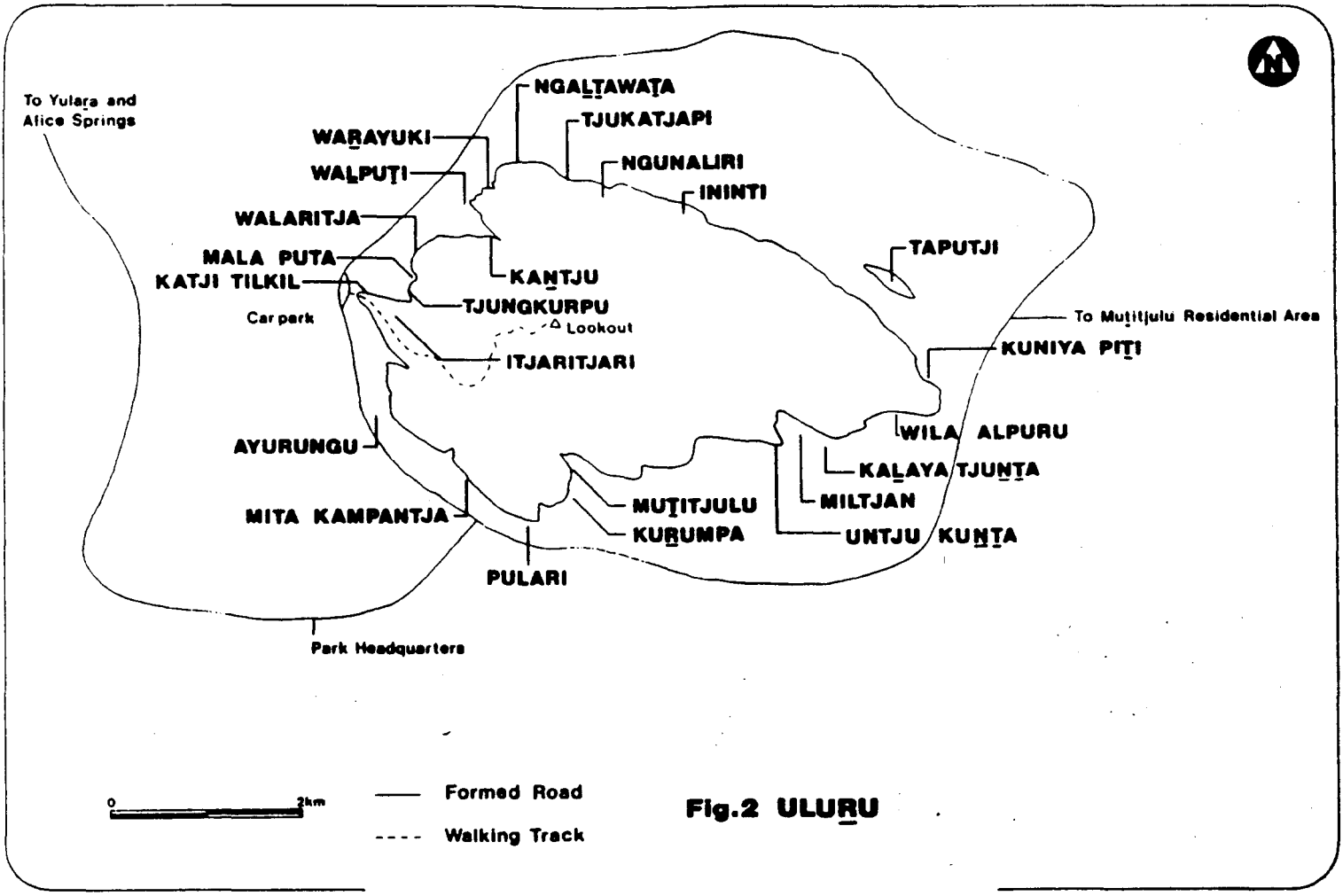



**Fig.2 ULURU**

Parc national d'Uluru-Kata Tjuta : plan d'Uluru et de Kata Tjuta /

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park : map of Uluru and Kata Tjuta

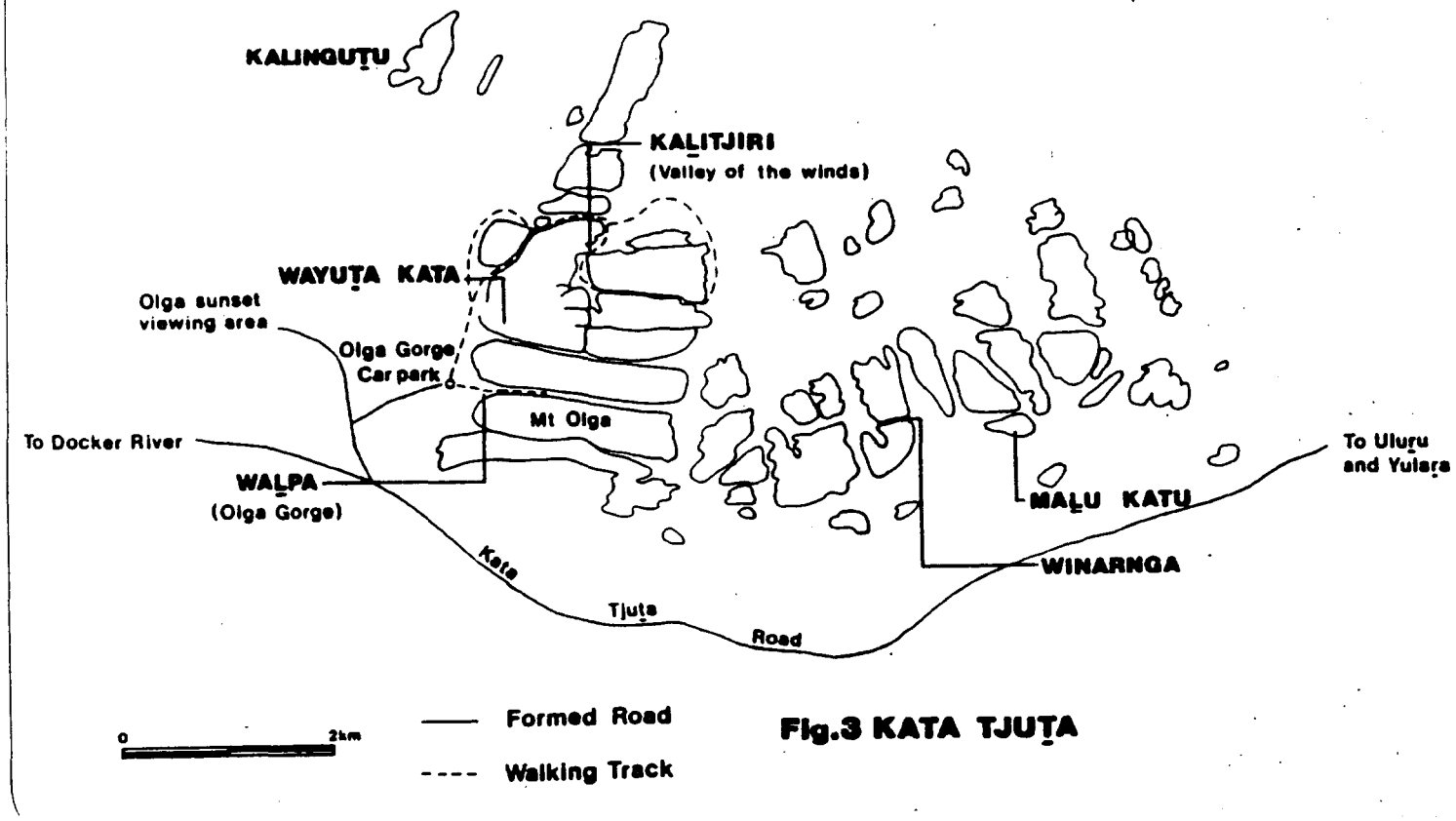



**Fig.3 KATA TJUTA**